



– Institute’s Colloquium –

Souleymane Diallo
(Universität zu Köln)

**“The Truth is that we are not Tuareg”
Exile, Memory, and the Making of Bellah-Iklan Community
in Niger**

This presentation explores the living conditions under which Tuareg former slave refugees from northern Mali rebuild their lives in the Nigerien diaspora and how these living conditions affect their self-understandings, established social status hierarchies, cultural practices, and religious identity formation. More specifically, the paper discusses accounts and practices by which these Bellah-Iklan refugees redefine their ethnic identity, and posit themselves as one [homogeneous] social collective in response to the predicaments induced by exile in the refugee camp of Abala. Special attention is paid to the refugees’s arguments that refer to their living conditions in Abala, common history of servitude, and subjection, their racial and also their religious identity as well as marginalization within the Malian nation-state, as reasons to renounce membership in the Tuareg ethnic group, and to claim a common identity as “Black people of the desert”. The analysis is informed by scholarly works that look at exile as a transformative social experience; the interplay of narratives of the past and “moral projects” and, stereotyping as reflexive social practice that involves constructing social hierarchies according to moral criteria. I argue that by presenting themselves as one [distinct---and homogenous] social collective, the refugees redefine the inferior social status they held in Tuareg society back home in northern Mali. The discussions offer insights into the existing debate on state-making in postcolonial Mali, for refugee studies and for scholarly debates on ethnicity, social identity formation, and memory politics.

Tuesday, December 5th 2017
4-6 p.m.
Institute of Ethnology
Studtstraße 21, Raum STU 105 (2.10)

Everybody is welcome!